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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Social development (*continued*) (A/71/188)

(a) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/71/61-E/2016/7 and A/71/214)

(b) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (*continued*) (A/71/177)

1. **Ms. Murad** (Brunei Darussalam), noting that 2016 marked the 10-year anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said that Brunei Darussalam had ratified the Convention on 11 April 2016. The Government was committed to ensuring that issues related to persons with disabilities were prioritized in the national agenda, and to that end several policies and programmes had been put in place to safeguard their rights. The inclusive national education policy did not segregate persons with disabilities, and special needs centres had been established to offer them guidance and skills training with paid allowances. Selected primary and secondary schools had been allocated funding and support to ensure that they provided quality, inclusive education for students with diverse learning needs.

2. With respect to access to health facilities, early detection programmes run by the Ministry of Health provided free services for diagnosis, assessment and treatment services for children. With respect to employment, the number of persons with disabilities hired in both the private and public sectors had increased over the years. Brunei Darussalam had enhanced training programmes for persons with disabilities in order to expand their job opportunities, and had made home- and community-based rehabilitation programmes available for those unable to visit training centres. Social security payments were given to persons with disabilities and their dependents, and supportive therapy was provided to alleviate parental stress.

3. Brunei Darussalam's strong commitment to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities was reflected in the creation in 2008 of a special committee on persons with disabilities and the elderly, which was in the process of implementing an action plan on persons with disabilities. With a view to furthering a rights-based approach to disability issues, a draft disability order had been formulated to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Those efforts were complemented by the work of non-governmental organizations and the private sector. At the regional level, Brunei Darussalam worked closely with other member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in promoting the welfare of persons with disabilities, and conferences and workshops focusing on disability issues were held on a regular basis. Given that the Convention had been explicitly mentioned 11 times in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all 193 Member States, regardless of whether they were parties to the Convention, should incorporate disability issues into their national plans.

4. **Ms. Nunoshiba** (Japan) said that the Government of Japan strongly supported the 2030 Agenda's guiding principle of leaving no one behind. It was important to create a more inclusive society by supporting persons with disabilities and encouraging them to participate in society and by ending discrimination against them. In April 2016, the Government had passed a law that called on administrative bodies and private companies to take concrete measures to eliminate such discrimination. The Government had also expanded its financial assistance for schools that accepted students with disabilities and provided accommodations for them.

5. Over the past 10 years, Japan's numerous contributions to international cooperation on disability issues had included job coaching projects to help persons with disabilities in the workplace. In Malaysia, more than 1,000 individuals had been trained as job coaches and over 650 persons with disabilities had been assisted with their employment needs.

6. In light of the difficulties faced by African countries, such as poverty and social inequality, Japan had held the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993. In the intervening years Japan had made contributions towards economic development and high-quality growth in areas such as improvement of health-care systems, comprehensive education and the empowerment of women. In 2016, the TICAD VI

Summit had been held in Africa for the first time, and Japan had committed to investing approximately 30 billion dollars into health care systems and personnel training for 10 million people over three years, beginning in 2016. In December 2016, Japan would host the third World Assembly for Women, which would address topics such as work-life balance, science and technology and health and sanitation.

7. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that Africa was home to the world's poorest people, with some of the highest unemployment rates and the most unequal distribution of wealth. South Africa therefore reaffirmed its commitment to Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, adopted by the African Union, and to the New Partnership for Africa's Development as a blueprint for advancing Africa's social and development agenda. Concerted efforts and continued support by the international community were needed to fulfil the commitments to address Africa's special needs.

8. South Africa continued to grapple with poverty, unemployment and inequality, with youth among the most affected groups, particularly where education was concerned. Those challenges required creative and inclusive policies for investments in youth in order to benefit from the demographic dividend. The South African Government had been exploring ways to create jobs. The health care sector in particular had the potential to generate millions of jobs, given proper investment. Two weeks previously, the Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth had released a report containing recommendations on the creation of health sector jobs, in particular for women and youth.

9. Given the multicultural nature of South African society, no single definition of "family" could be comprehensive enough to cover all forms of families in the country, and social policies were needed to address their various concerns. The Government had issued a White Paper on Families to provide guidelines in that area. In addition, South Africa remained committed to the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

10. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that concerted efforts by the international community had resulted in significant progress in global social development and that social rights were now at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Social Development. However, the required results in areas such as poverty reduction, job creation and improvements to health care and education had not yet been achieved. In addition, complex and coordinated measures were needed to address mass movements of refugees and migrants and escalating inequality.

11. Kyrgyzstan had set labour migration as one of the priorities of its national policy. Remittances sent by labour migrants had a significant effect on the well-being of migrants' families and a considerable portion of them was spent on housing, health and other aspects of social development. Her Government would continue to support efforts by the international community to protect the rights of refugees, migrants and their family members. It had incorporated its commitment to sustainable development into its national sustainable development strategy, while a programme on social protection adopted in 2015 defined key areas of social policy to be improved, including support for children and families living in difficult circumstances, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Kyrgyzstan was making proactive efforts to eliminate poverty, guarantee gender equality, ensure quality and accessible education and involve young people in politics.

12. **Ms. Kydyralieva** (Kyrgyzstan), speaking as a youth delegate, said that contemporary problems could not be resolved without the creative potential, energy and enthusiasm of the 1.8 billion young people worldwide. She welcomed the large number of national and global platforms on which young people were able to put forward their views and proposals. In Kyrgyzstan, where 30 per cent of the population were between 14 and 28 years of age, the Government paid close attention to youth issues, as shown by the fact that it had joined the United Nations youth delegate programme in 2016 and had convened the World Youth Kurultai (conference) in August 2016.

13. **Ms. Hamid** (Sudan) said that 2015 had witnessed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which had all aimed at tackling shortcomings in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including with regard to social development matters. Those documents had also provided a tighter

framework for ending poverty and promoting full employment and decent work.

14. The daunting challenges facing the world included financial crises, fluctuations in food prices, rising energy prices, climate change, the volatile security situation in many countries, high youth unemployment, global health threats and humanitarian crises. Concerted efforts would be needed internationally to strengthen international cooperation and partnership with a view to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. In furtherance of the commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit, the Government of the Sudan had drafted a national plan to combat poverty that provided for, among other items, the establishment of a fund to support businesses started by graduates, expansion of basic and higher education, eradication of illiteracy, provision of potable drinking water, building of housing for vulnerable populations, expansion of sanitation networks and the achievement of food security.

15. The Diwan al-Zakat social care agency played a leading role in achieving social justice and instilling the values of solidarity and compassion in Sudanese citizens; the Diwan had also supported educational and health care institutions. Special attention had also been given to older persons, with the State facilitating health care treatment for older persons and setting up social programmes aimed at creating a family environment for them.

16. Given the importance of political stability for fostering security and social integration, in April 2014 the President of the Sudan had launched a comprehensive national dialogue and had invited representatives from all segments of Sudanese society to discuss six main priorities, namely peace and unity, the economy, basic rights and freedoms, identity, foreign relations and governance. This initiative would conclude on 10 October 2016 with the adoption of final recommendations.

17. As part of the efforts to achieve equality for persons with disabilities, the Sudan had enacted laws to reinforce their rights, achieve social justice and outlaw discrimination on the basis of disability. An employment and economic empowerment strategy had been created for persons with disabilities for the years 2015 to 2020, one of the most important aims of which was to combat poverty through employment of persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors, as well as microfinance programmes and funds, the national fund to support persons with disabilities, allocation of funds for social housing, and academic and vocational programmes.

18. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that, in order to accomplish the goals of the 2030 Agenda and face the challenges posed in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, there was a pressing need to continue to combat poverty and inequality, to promote decent, productive employment for all and invest in basic social services. To that end, the Government of Senegal had focused on accelerating inclusive economic growth through the Emerging Senegal Plan, which provided a framework for social and economic policy, with consolidation of the rule of law and good governance as the central pillar.

19. In order to overcome structural factors that engendered and perpetuated social marginalization and exclusion, Senegal had focused on promoting sustainable human development through mechanisms to care for the most vulnerable groups and poorest families, while strengthening the capacities of women's organizations. A number of programmes had been initiated, such as the equal opportunity charter, universal health coverage and family security grants. Other programmes had been created to address issues such as gender equality, social protection, microfinance, child vulnerability and women's entrepreneurship, while national and international legal instruments serving as guides.

20. The Government of Senegal was improving the living conditions of older persons by encouraging their full involvement in training and employment. In the education sector, the Literacy and Occupational Apprenticeship Programme to Combat Poverty was designed to increase the literacy rate mainly among rural populations and women through functional competence-based literacy and through access to microfinance. In the area of youth employment, Senegal had created a plan around a national agency for youth employment and a community agriculture programme.

21. **Ms. Buch** and **Mr. Klausch** (Germany), speaking as youth delegates, described the action young people all over Germany were taking to make the world a better place and the changes that they were seeking. In terms of what they wished to see from the United Nations, they said that equal access to basic resources would provide a strong foundation for youth participation in society; Member States should educate their young people to become global citizens and responsible leaders; the United Nations should follow its own guidelines on youth participation as set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond; and each country should review its youth participation mechanisms. Young people already knew they were the future; they simply needed to be empowered to be responsible, active and hopeful leaders.

22. **Mr. Brown** (Liberia) said that his country was aligning its 18-year national development plan with the Agenda 2030 through inclusive consultations to support ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Equal Representation and Participation Bill had recently been passed by the Lower House of Liberia and, subject to approval by the Upper House, would enable young people and persons with disabilities to add their voices to the decision-making process. Vocational training programmes were being reformed to enhance employability and to address issues such as structural inequalities in the labour market, discrimination and wage disparities.

23. The Liberian Government expected to derive demographic dividends from its youthful population and high fertility and population growth rates. Plummeting prices for its main exports on global markets might present challenges for the implementation of its five-year Agenda for Transformation. Nevertheless, the momentum had not been lost, as current decentralization initiatives had begun to enhance the delivery of social services and his country would continue to rise while adhering to the guiding principle of "leaving no one behind".

24. **Ms. Quiel Murcia** (Panama) said that, given the importance of the social dimension of sustainable development and the ambition to leave no one behind, the 2030 Agenda must be implemented in full. The Panamanian Government had adopted a normative, institutional and operative framework for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals. A multisectoral commission would address national appropriation and empowerment, while the Social Affairs Office was responsible for coordination among the different institutions. It had also adopted a national strategic plan, "Panamá 2030", which contained a road map setting out targets and indicators for achieving the Goals. In recognition of the benefits of sharing good practices, Panama would be participating in the voluntary national reviews of implementation of the 2030 Agenda taking place in 2017 as part of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

25. Despite the strong economic growth recorded by Panama in recent years, there was still great inequality in the country and poverty levels remained high, especially in rural and indigenous areas. Her Government had prioritized the provision of quality education and the development of social capital with a view to strengthening community leadership and organizational capacity. A multidimensional poverty index was being developed in order to formulate more targeted poverty-reduction policies and strategies. In 2015, Panama had introduced disability certification, while a new national statistical system would centralize data on persons with disabilities to inform policymaking. In addition, the Holy See had announced that Panama would host the next World Youth Day in 2019, which would be a great opportunity to foster a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Over 70 per cent of the social budget would be spent on education, health, housing, infrastructure, transport and environment, all with the aim of overcoming poverty, accumulating human capital and achieving environmental sustainability. Panama was committed to continuing to work at the national and global level to combat inequality.

26. **Ms. Bezdekova** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people were severely underrepresented in democratic systems and were starting to question democracy because their voices could not be heard. Moreover, children and young people were liable to get lost in the mass of freely available information and be vulnerable to propaganda from extremist and terrorist groups. In response, it was vital to promote quality education, which fostered critical thinking and other valuable skills. Children and young people should also be encouraged to participate in decision-making within the school environment.

27. A university degree was no longer enough to secure a job for young people and could even saddle them with financial burdens. The availability of training opportunities and internships was therefore crucial for the enhancement of youth employability and decent work. Indeed, easier access for young people to the labour market would benefit society at large. Despite efforts made in recent years, the unemployment rate among young people remained alarmingly high. She therefore advocated enhancing collaboration between educational institutions, future employers and relevant stakeholders. In particular, paid internships should be the norm.

28. **Ms. Vuova** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it was impossible to talk about sustainable development without including young people, who represented one half of the world's population. She called on Member States to give young people a platform for expressing their views and participating in decision-making and to involve them further in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Youth empowerment and global prosperity were mutually reinforcing, and it was important to harness the potential of inclusion and diversity. She expressed the hope that one day young people would no longer be considered a vulnerable group but rather a source of inspiration and innovation.

29. **Mr. Kafle** (Nepal) said that despite the significant progress made over recent years, much remained to be done for Nepal to achieve its social development goals. In particular, people-centred development should be prioritized through more effective measures at all levels to eradicate poverty, create jobs, promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth and provide social protection. The new Constitution of Nepal fully embraced the principles of human rights, human dignity, inclusion and proportional representation through a rights-based approach, with gender and social issues at its core. It ambitiously broadened the rights of women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and other marginalized communities. Notably, it provided for 33 per cent representation of women in parliament and for gender balance in the most senior elected offices.

30. As a State party to seven core international human rights instruments and to major International Labour Organization conventions, Nepal was committed to raising levels of economic, social and political inclusion and participation. Its fourteenth development plan focused on reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment and included programmes to enhance the skills of marginalized people. In addition, Nepal had increased targeted programmes that built capacity and promoted skills development, with training and institutional support offered to women, children, girls, persons with disabilities, senior citizens and ethnic minorities. Efforts were also being made to provide children with free compulsory education.

31. **Mr. Nduhuura** (Uganda) said that the world was currently witnessing an unprecedented surge in migrants who were seeking new economic opportunities or fleeing armed conflicts, poverty, food insecurity, terrorism or human rights abuses. At the same time, opportunities for asylum were dwindling worldwide. Having learned from experience that no one was a refugee by choice, Uganda had incorporated a refugee protection policy into its national development plan and its new United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The Government supported the move towards a global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees and envisaged that the Ugandan model could contribute to a comprehensive refugee response framework.

32. He called on the international community to address the gap between humanitarian and development assistance; provide support for a settlement transformation agenda to narrow that gap in Uganda's national development plan; and tackle the root causes of the current crisis so that refugees could return to their countries of origin as soon as possible. Both the international community and the countries of origin needed to recognize that the refugee crisis was a transitional, not a permanent, phenomenon.

33. **Mr. Omer** (Eritrea) said that two decades after the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration, millions still languished in poverty. The social development crisis was the result of numerous global challenges, including migration, recurrent conflicts, terrorism and extremism. As Member States worked to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, they should pay attention to what had not worked previously in international development cooperation, in order to

avoid repeating the same efforts and yet expecting different results.

34. The two decades since Eritrea's independence had been a period for rehabilitation, rebuilding, development and healing of the wounds of war. Over that time, Eritrea's vision of social development had been anchored on promoting social justice, with an objective of empowering all of its nationals, and ensuring equitable access to basic social and economic services and opportunities. Education, which absorbed the lion's share of the government budget, had enabled adult illiteracy to soar from under 20 per cent to nearly 90 per cent between 1991 and 2015. The Government had also taken measures to promote equal opportunities, especially in regions which had been disadvantaged in the past. Eritrea was one of the few African countries to have achieved all of its health-related Millennium Development Goals and remained committed to sustaining those achievements and ensuring universal health coverage. The Government had been working closely with the Eritrean War Disabled Veterans' Association to eliminate the stigma of disability and ensure that persons with disabilities had access to medical care, training, rehabilitation, counselling, financial security and employment and could participate in decisions affecting them.

35. Lastly, he highlighted that sanctions and the occupation of Eritrean sovereign territory had hampered progress towards the eradication of poverty. The international community should not continue to ignore those issues.

36. **Ms. Soulama** (Burkina Faso) said that Burkina Faso was striving to include young people, persons with disabilities and older persons in its pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, as reflected in its national social and economic development plan. Burkina Faso had also adopted a national social protection policy in 2012, and more recently, a national solidarity charter aimed at strengthening social cohesion. Other concrete actions designed to reduce inequality included cash transfers for schooling; grants to 500 older persons for income-generating activities; and a national strategy on inclusive education (2016-2020), which was accompanied by a plan of action on education and training for children with disabilities.

37. Burkina Faso, like most other developing countries, also faced challenges in terms of employment, education and vocational training, in particular since young people under the age of 35 constituted 80 per cent of its population, as well as with regard to the empowerment of women and care of persons with disabilities and older persons. The Government was planning to implement a number of measures that would protect and promote the vulnerable sectors of society. They included giving women greater access to productive resources and promoting their fundamental rights; reducing the number of homeless children by 50 per cent; and establishing a database on persons with disabilities. A law was being adopted on the rights of older persons, and a planned national multisectoral study would be used to develop a national strategy on older persons.

38. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that, in the Copenhagen Declaration, Governments had pledged to put the needs, rights and aspirations of people at the centre of development, and that pledge had been embedded in the 2030 Agenda. However, fulfilment of the new commitments would require more than rhetoric; collective efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda should include and involve people from conflict areas, regardless of the legal status of the territories in which they lived. On the basis of equal rights and self-determination, people were free to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. That was the essence of the notion of leaving no one behind.

39. In 2014, the Government of Armenia had adopted a national strategy on human rights, which provided a platform for sharing responsibility with civil society on the protection and promotion of human rights and sustainable social development. Her Government had also revised its social development strategy, which prioritized the most vulnerable groups and aimed to provide needs-based services.

40. Around 20,000 Syrian refugees had recently sought protection in Armenia. The challenges of receiving and integrating refugees from Syria were high on her Government's agenda; Armenia offered them residence permits and naturalization, while also providing support in areas such as housing, medical care and education.

41. Despite noteworthy progress in social development over the past 25 years, her Government was fully aware of the remaining challenges in the

country, which were the subject of public debate and scrutiny and were significantly compounded by the unilateral, coercive measures used against Armenia, such as closed borders, which continued to severely hamper the advancement of social development.

42. **Mr. Volom** (Hungary), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the participation of youth delegates paved the way to the global recognition of young people in decision-making. He encouraged all Member States that had not yet done so to join the youth delegate programme, so that the outstanding potential of the current generation was not left unfulfilled. Lasting change could be created for marginalized persons only at the grassroots level, and the low social engagement of young people was a worldwide problem that needed to be addressed if the Sustainable Development Goals were to be achieved. The Hungarian Government had set an example by launching programmes to facilitate youth development and strengthening cooperation between the Government, the private sector and civil society. Violent extremist groups were increasingly targeting young people, but efforts to involve young people in socially beneficial activities and help them to set personal goals would help to protect them from radicalization.

43. **Ms. Guzman Madera** (Dominican Republic) said that her Government was seeking to eradicate poverty and overcome inequality through more forceful public policies and wealth redistribution and by creating opportunities for, and defending the rights of, its citizens. Investments in education, health care and youth employment were pillars of the national effort to break the cycle of poverty. Some 400,000 jobs had been created and over 780,000 people had been lifted out of poverty. Gains had also been recorded in adult literacy and 6.3 million persons currently benefited from social security.

44. Sharing the same vision and objectives as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the National Development Strategy of the Dominican Republic sought to secure the full inclusion of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Public policies were in place to protect older persons and enable them to lead an active and productive lifestyle. The Integrated National System for Older Persons recognized that the State, the family and the community were jointly responsible for protecting the dignity of older persons and enhancing their quality of life. Public prosecutors' offices had been established to deal in a timely fashion with cases of elder abuse. Under the National Accessibility Plan, an enabling environment was being created for persons with disabilities. Faced with unprecedentedly high rates of employment, young people were demanding quality education, decent work and a greater role in decision-making. The international community should draw on their energy and capacity for innovation and their willingness to follow up on the 2030 Agenda.

45. **Mr. Mulugeta** (Ethiopia) said that the conflicts and natural disasters occurring in different parts of the world made it all the more crucial to continue to address development issues through social policy intervention and implementation. The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change must be fully implemented. Convinced that social development was a prerequisite for inclusive growth and sustainable development, his Government afforded persons with disabilities preferential treatment in health and education services and equal opportunities to enable them to participate fully in all spheres of life.

46. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing had been translated into local working languages so that it could be accessible to the population. Recognizing the family as an agent of development, the Government of Ethiopia had been taking measures to strengthen it in all spheres. The number of educational institutions had increased at all levels and enrolment rates were also higher. His Government continued to address, at the national level, the enormous challenges posed by poverty, unemployment and climate change, and stood ready to work diligently with the international community and development partners, whose contribution remained critical.

47. **Mr. Rafee** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the best way to promote sustainable development was to bring together all segments of society, take into account the concerns of youth and include young people in the development process. Inclusivity was more important than ever in view of the large number of global challenges such as unemployment, extremist ideology, the increase in

terrorist acts, climate change and the deteriorating humanitarian situation. In confronting those challenges, it would be necessary to strengthen cooperation and communication with young people and find new and innovative methods of developing their capacities.

48. Empowering and assisting youth was not only a means of protecting them from poverty and extremism, but also was the best way to harness their energy. Quality education, vocational training and decent jobs were the key tools for empowering youth. The efforts that had been made by the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth were welcome and reflected the commitment of the international community to empowering young people and enlisting their participation in creating a stable world. One initiative taken in the United Arab Emirates to empower youth consisted of youth workshops, where topics of interest to young people could be discussed. The first workshop had been held in April 2016 and had focused on how youth could acquire the skills of the future.

49. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that it was time for Governments to step up efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and the achievement of food security. Noting with concern that over 40 per cent of the world's active youth were either unemployed or working but living in poverty, he said that failure to reverse the negative trend in youth employment could create fertile ground for radicalization and violent extremism. More generally, given the close connection between social development and peace and security, further efforts were needed to find solutions to armed conflicts.

50. A strong economy was not enough to ensure that all segments of the population benefited from economic growth; social justice was only possible if the needs of the most vulnerable population groups were placed at the top of the agenda. Azerbaijan had been one of the fastest growing economies over the past ten years and had translated its success into improved socioeconomic conditions for all, with significant drops in poverty and unemployment rates, new housing for over 250,000 internally displaced persons, and the construction of 3,000 schools and 600 hospitals and health centres. Moreover, a recent reduction in Government revenue had not resulted in cuts to social spending, but in accelerated diversification of the economy through the establishment of new industrial areas, the creation of agencies to provide housing under favourable conditions for low-income families and support for family businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises.

51. **Ms. Maduhu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country had integrated the Sustainable Development Goals in all its national plans and strategies. The second national five-year development plan on the theme "Nurturing industrialization for economic transformation and human development" and the new poverty-reduction strategy for Zanzibar were informed by the outcomes of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Social protection policies had been adopted to reduce poverty and legal policies and administrative reforms put in place to reduce inequality. Efforts were being made to empower youth, older persons and persons with disabilities to lead full lives within their communities. Older persons had access to fast-track desks in almost all hospitals and benefited from free health care. On the other hand, persons with disabilities were hampered by a severe lack of assistive devices and could not access training and other programmes. Conscious that the primary responsibility of Governments was to ensure the well-being of their people, the Government of Tanzania had mobilized domestic resources and improved institutions but also appealed for greater international cooperation, in particular from the industrialized countries, through official development assistance, trade, debt relief, capacity-building and technical assistance.

52. **Mr. Al Noaimi** (Bahrain) said that the reforms carried out in his country reflected the priority attached to social development. The parliament had adopted an action plan to address social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, the first plan of its kind in Bahrain and the result of constitutional amendments made in 2012. The country's legislators had ensured that it was in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

53. Bahrain had strived to empower families and make them self-sufficient through numerous economic, educational, security and health programmes. The Family Bank provided funding for families and

microprojects, and social development centres provided social solutions and family counselling. The centres provided rehabilitation for family members and helped them to improve their professional and labour skills.

54. Bahrain's social development efforts also addressed the needs of persons with disabilities. In 2007, Bahrain had established a services centre that provided support and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities so that they could enter the labour market and find appropriate jobs. The Ministry of Education had launched programmes to rehabilitate children with disabilities, to adapt schools and universities to their needs and to provide them with transportation. The needs of older persons were addressed through care centres and the provision of medical and psychological services. Bahrain had cooperated with the United Nations Development Programme in Manama to link its social strategies on disability, children and older persons to the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

55. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that her country's early achievement of the Millennium Development Goals had resulted in a qualitative leap in human development. Indeed, the national development plans implemented since the year 2000 had targeted several strategic objectives, including poverty reduction, decent job opportunities for all, revitalization of rural areas and reduction of territorial disparities. Investment incentive mechanisms had been established for sectors including agriculture, industry, tourism and small and medium-sized businesses. In conjunction with measures to streamline and speed up administrative procedures, those incentives had triggered a sharp fall in the unemployment rate (from 15.3 per cent in 2005 to 9.7 per cent in 2015). Thanks to its commitment to providing free education, Algeria had seen its school enrolment rate soar to over 95 per cent.

56. Health care was guaranteed for vulnerable populations and, as a result, infant and maternal mortality rates were down. Meanwhile, life expectancy had risen to nearly 76 years. Her country was committed to providing health care and education to persons with disabilities and had adopted laws, regulations and policies to promote and protect older persons.

57. **Mr. Castro Cordoba** (Costa Rica) said that sustainable development could only be inclusive if growth was coupled with equity and the creation of opportunities. A people-centred approach would empower individuals, enabling them to realize their full potential. Equitable access to quality education and decent work was vital, while participation in decision-making processes and in political, social, cultural and economic life was indispensable for the well-being of society. Poverty engendered exclusion and was not just an affront to human dignity but also a form of violation of human rights.

58. Under his country's National Development Plan, inclusive social protection systems provided equitable access to education and health care. Adopting a multidimensional approach to poverty, his Government sought to overcome the various structural development issues, in particular those relating to vulnerable groups. It was committed to combating all forms of discrimination and in particular gender discrimination. The empowerment of women and girls was crucial for eliminating poverty and for sustainable development. Persons with disabilities should be recognized not merely as beneficiaries but also as agents of development, and inclusive policies would be a good investment for the society as a whole. By 2030, older persons would constitute the fastest growing group in the developing countries and their contribution would be vital for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It was important to move towards the adoption of an international convention on the rights of older persons that would provide full protection and enable them to participate fully in the social and economic development of their societies.

59. The family had a fundamental role to play in the formation of non-discriminatory social actors and societies committed to equity and equal rights. The creation of such societies was predicated on the recognition of the widely diverse forms of the family that existed in the modern world.

60. **Mr. Otto** (Palau) said that persons with mental health conditions, owing to discriminatory laws and institutions, were almost always excluded from full participation in economic and social life. The human cost of mental health conditions was staggering and a leading cause of premature mortality, including suicide. Indeed, 75 per cent of suicides occurred in

low- and middle-income countries. Mental health services were often unavailable, but even where they were, many people did not use them out of fear of exclusion and discrimination. According to a World Health Organization estimate, one in four persons would be directly affected by such a condition at some point in their lives.

61. The United Nations should continue to work towards the goals embodied in the 2030 Agenda. Mental wellness could not flourish in conditions of poverty, conflict and injustice. The international community should redouble its efforts to eradicate structural barriers to inclusion, discriminatory laws and practices and stigma, which stripped those with mental health conditions of their fundamental human rights. In addition, efforts should be made to reverse the current situation, in which 85 per cent of people currently needing health services did not receive treatment, so that, by 2030, 85 per cent did receive treatment. Lastly, attitudinal barriers must be overcome.

62. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that there were many outstanding social development challenges, despite the numerous plans of action and recommendations issued by the summits and conferences of the past few decades. Factors such as poor governance and climate change continued to devastate economies and contributed to entrenched poverty and famine, leading to greater inequality and vulnerability.

63. With a view to implementation of the 2030 Agenda, his Government had launched a number of major projects. Among those initiatives, it had worked to secure a nationwide power supply in an effort to boost industrial production and thereby create more jobs for young people; it was building more educational establishments and supporting women's literacy programmes; and it was working on the provision of free maternal and child health care. In addition, as part of a framework agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Guinea was assigning a portion of its mining tax receipts to combating malnutrition. His Government had also formulated a national social development strategy and set up a national pension fund. Furthermore, since inclusive development and improving accessibility were key to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, it had prepared a guide to their rights, supplied wheelchairs and crutches, and set up a programme that facilitated access to education for children with disabilities by providing assistive devices.

64. Despite the political will demonstrated by the Government of Guinea, its efforts to further social development had been wiped out by the epidemic of the Ebola virus, which had hit the economy and the health system very hard. With the aim of seeking technical and financial assistance from its bilateral and multilateral partners, Guinea had set up a post-Ebola recovery fund, which had been the subject of a presentation in New York on 22 September by the Minister for Youth.

65. **Ms. Arditi di Castelvetere Manzo** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the Order had been active in the humanitarian sphere for over 900 years. It worked around the world to support the vulnerable and marginalized, believing that everyone had the right to live a healthy, dignified life. Every year, it organized an international summer camp for children with disabilities, as well as national-level camps in a number of European countries and Lebanon. It directed numerous specialized centres for the elderly in Europe and the Americas and provided a variety of services to make life at home easier for them. Local activities took place year round and many of the Order's charitable projects were run by its 80,000 volunteers.

66. The Secretary-General's report on the realization of internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities and progress made in the implementation of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities (A/71/214) had highlighted the impact on exclusion of trends such as climate change and demographic change. The Order's international relief organization was helping vulnerable populations implement disaster risk reduction measures and was assisting in long-term reconstruction and development programmes. Inclusive development and the implementation of the internationally agreed upon development goals for persons with disabilities lay at the heart of the Order's work. The Order was conscious of the synergies between the provision of basic services and social development and would continue to

work towards those goals in partnership with the United Nations community.

67. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the note by the Secretariat entitled "World Social Situation 2016: Leaving No One Behind — the Imperative of Inclusive Development" (A/71/188) was consistent with the statement in the ILO report *World Employment and Social Outlook: Transforming jobs to end poverty* that it would not be possible to reduce poverty in a lasting manner without decent work and that, while decent work was a necessary condition for eradicating poverty, it was not sufficient on its own.

68. In adopting the 2030 Agenda, Governments and the international community had recognized that achieving an inclusive world meant addressing several interdependent goals, including the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities, the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all. The world of work was undergoing a profound transformation, owing to, among other factors, technological progress and the changing nature of production.

69. The commitment of ILO to the Sustainable Development Goals had been reinforced at the International Labour Conference of 2016 by the tripartite representatives, who had adopted a resolution entitled "Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work". At the national level, ILO decent work country programmes were embracing the Goals, while at the global level, ILO was aligning its strategic planning cycle to the four-year cycle of the United Nations system. Over the past 12 months, ILO had launched a number of joint initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They included the Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth, launched in collaboration with 21 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection, a joint venture with the World Bank as well as several Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations; SDG Alliance 8.7, a global initiative for coordinated action on forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery; and the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth, an initiative led by Sweden to promote social dialogue and better working conditions in the private sector. Decent work was a pathway to a just society and a means of ensuring that development efforts were both people-focused and rights-based.

70. **Mr. Shulgin** (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed regret that some Member States were exploiting the agenda item on social development to promote narrowly political goals that had nothing to do with development and human rights. Responding to remarks made by the representative of Georgia at the 3rd meeting of the Committee, he said that the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a choice made by their peoples in response to the aggressive action of Georgia against South Ossetia. Instead of speculating about the fates of thousands of Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians and other nationals, the Georgian delegation would do better to strive in earnest for reconciliation and to seek equal and good-neighbourly relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. That would also have a positive impact on the social development of those countries.

71. Responding to remarks made by the representative of Ukraine at the 3rd meeting of the Committee, he said that the delegation of Ukraine had repeated its accusations against the Russian Federation on every possible international platform, giving the impression that its goal was to fuel tensions and create an atmosphere of political hysteria. The delegation had failed to mention that social and other problems of the inhabitants of south-east Ukraine had been caused by the suspension of payments of social benefits and the malfunction of the banking system.

72. Turning to Crimea, he said that it was clearly the desire of Ukraine and its sponsors to cause as much trouble as possible to the inhabitants of Crimea by introducing unilateral sanctions and other restrictions as revenge for the choice made by the population of Crimea. Despite economic and transportation barriers placed by Ukraine, the Crimean economy continued to grow, the tourist industry was developing, welfare payments and public sector salaries were increasing and medical and other infrastructure was being modernized. The Russian Federation was committed to maintaining such progress in the future.

73. **Ms. Dolidze** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate and in exercise of the right of reply, said that, despite the misleading statement delivered by the Russian delegation, young people residing in the occupied territories of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali

regions, and more specifically in the Gali district, were being prevented from exercising their fundamental rights to education in their native language, freedom of movement and access to health care.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.